

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex, Domiciliary No. 3  
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South  
Minneapolis  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-C

HABS  
MINN,  
27-MINAP,  
19-C-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,  
DOMICILIARY NO. 3

HABS No. MN-74C

Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,  
Hennepin County, Minnesota.

USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;  
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: Razed in 1987

Significance: The Domiciliary Building Number Three was erected for the Minnesota Soldiers' Home to provide shelter for American veterans. The Minnesota Soldiers' Home was established in 1887 by the Minnesota Legislature to accommodate men and women retired from active duty in the military. The Domiciliary Building Number Three along with the Domiciliary Number Four were an important link to the care provided to these needy people by this public institution which is carried over today by The Minnesota Veterans' Home.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1891 (Source: Minnesota Legislative Manual of 1893.)
2. Architect: Warren B. Dunnell and Horace Cleveland (site).
3. Original and subsequent owners: State of Minnesota
4. Building, contractor, suppliers: The contract for the work was given to a man by the name of D. Bruce on June 16, 1891. (Source: Minneapolis Tribune)
5. Original plans and construction: Not available.
6. Alterations and additions: Between 1929 and 1940 a metal fire escape was added to the north side of the building.

B. Historical Context:

In 1887 a movement was started by the Minnesota Department of the Army of the Republic to establish a home for the veterans of American military service. Money was appropriated through the 1887 Minnesota Legislature in a sum of \$100,000. The City of Minneapolis donated a 50-acre tract of land, located at the intersection of the Mississippi River and the Minnehaha Creek, adjacent to Minnehaha Park. The Board of Trustees and the governor established an overall master plan and site plan with architect Warren B. Dunnell. They established a "cottage plan" of construction in which the public institution could be built in stages as the need for new buildings and its corresponding appropriations became available. The Board of Trustees consisted of Henry Castle - President, R.R. Henderson - Vice President, I.H.B. Beebe - Secretary, L.A. Hancock, W.P. Dunnington, L.L. Baxter, J.R. Russell, J.P. Upshaw, and Thomas MacMillen as the commandant.

In 1888 two cottages and one section of the boiler house were built. In 1890 the central wing of the hospital and another section of the boiler house was built to accommodate the physicians and the growing need for a laundry. The 1891 the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$105,000 over a two year period to construct more buildings to fill the required needs of the institution. The first \$52,000 was appropriated to construct Domiciliary Building No. Three, and a domestic building. As stated in the law of the Chapter 14B, General Laws of Minnesota for 1887, the buildings were to have general uniform architectural design, though pleasantly varied in detail. The domiciliary building was divided into rooms accommodating six to eight individuals and housed a total of 50 individuals. The domestic building was to have a basement to house the kitchen and dining hall; the first floor was for the commandant residence and headquarters, library, and reading room; and the second floor was for additional sleeping rooms for the inmates as the need arose. The Administration Building was built across the street from Cottages #3 and #4, as they were referred to in 1892. Cottages #5 and #6, built in 1895 and 1905 respectively, were also used as domiciliary buildings. In 1902 the new dining hall and kitchen were built, and moved out of the domestic building.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Domiciliary Building No. Three was a two and a half story masonry structure with an open air masonry red porch attached to the front side. It was covered with a brick facing and accented with a light colored rough

sandstone over the windows and separating the gable roof. The building was fashioned to be in uniform architectural character with the other institution buildings on the site as well as blending in with the surrounds of St. Paul and Minneapolis. The style designed by W.B. Dunnell was of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

2. Condition of fabric: Razed in 1987.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Domiciliary Building No. Three was located at 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Lot 5, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The combined dimensions were 90' by 90'.
2. Foundations: Two feet thick sandstone footings supported the structure.
3. Walls:
  - a. North elevation: The north facade had two stories which had a half circle bay protruding out and capped by a coned shaped roof. There were windows in each floor of the half-circle bay. The walls were load bearing and made of red brick and are 12" thick. There was a later metal fire escape stairway attached to the exterior of the building.
  - b. South elevation: The south facade has two stories with two windows. The walls were load bearing and made of red brick which is 12" thick. Over the windows, the lintels were made of a rough faced, light colored sandstone.
  - c. East elevation: The east facade was two and one-half stories high, and also a load bearing wall, 12" thick. There were three sets of three bay windows on each of the floors and a set of three windows in the gable. Each set had a sandstone lintel overhead. There was a masonry porch attached to the front and covered with a flat roof. The gable above the attic window was decorated with a checker board pattern of rough faced sandstone.
  - d. West elevation: The west elevation was two and one-half stories high, and also a load bearing wall, 12" thick. There were no windows indicated on the insurance maps. There was a covered wood porch structure attached to the house.

4. Structural system, framing: All the exterior walls were load bearing brick walls 12" thick red brick with wood floors firecut into the wall.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There were two doorways on the front of the building and two on the back. All the doors open onto wood porches, the bottom two being covered.
  - b. Windows: Photos show the windows as 1/1 double hung with groupings of three windows per set. They also have small single lite windows over each individual window on the first and second floors. The lintels above the windows were of a continuous piece of rough faced sandstone.
6. Roof: The roof was a steep pitched gabled roof that was gabled on all four sides. The roofs were covered with black slate.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:
  - a. The building was divided into rooms to accommodate six to eight people with modern conveniences. The cottage was intended to have one general sitting room on the main floor, but overcrowding eliminated this space. The attic floor was also used at times for the over crowding problem.
2. Stairways:
  - a. There was a U-shaped stairwell incorporated near the back door, that led to the second floor and the attic. In the 1930's a metal stairs was added to the exterior to satisfy the fire codes of Minneapolis.
3. Flooring: The floor in the basement consisted of concrete slabs, while the rest of the floors were of maple wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Unknown.
5. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Hot water was supplied by boilers in the heating plant. These supplied the heat source for the steam radiators located throughout the building.
  - b. Lighting: Incandescent electric lamps.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Domiciliary Building No. Three was built as a residence for the honorably discharged veterans of the American military service. The main facade on the east side, which was also consisted the front, faced the Mississippi River. The river is in a ravine approximately 100 feet below the campus level. This location, where the Mississippi River and the Minnehaha Creek intersect, served as a steamboat landing for ships coming up the river from the south. There was also a secondary access to the building from the west side with an attached porch. The domiciliary was an important piece of the campus site plan that Horace Cleveland designed, in association with Warren B. Dunnell, in 1887. Its sister building, the domestic building, which was built at the same time, faced an oval shaped road. On this site was the Administration Building built in 1892, to the east. The site was covered with large shady trees and rolling green grass spaces to provide a quiet and restful place for the retirees. Its positioning adjacent to the Minnehaha Falls and the Minnehaha Park helped reinforce this tranquil environment.
2. Other buildings in the complex:
  - a. Domiciliary Building No. 1 (1888)
  - b. Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888)
  - c. Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891)
  - d. Domiciliary Building No. 5 (1895)
  - e. Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905)
  - f. Main Dining Room No. 7 (1902)
  - g. Domiciliary Building No. 7 (1936)
  - h. Administration Finance Office (1892)
  - i. Commissary (1950)
  - j. Warehouse No. 13 (1891)
  - k. Power Plant Building No. 14 (1937)
  - l. Chapel-Auditorium (1962)

- m. Infirmary-Building No. 16 (1973)
- n. Residential Care Building No. 17 (1977)
- o. Paint Shop and Garage (1899)
- p. Ten-stall Garage (1925)

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Photographs: Several photographs showing general views of the Domestic Building No. Three were found in the audio-visual collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. Other photographs of the Domiciliary Building No. Three were found in the history collection at the Minnesota Public Library.
- B. Maps: A series of insurance maps beginning with 1892 and ending in 1950, show the exterior dimensions, materials, roof covering and wall sizes at six different points in time.
- C. Bibliography:
  - 1. Books:

Christianson, Theodore. History of Minnesota. Minnesota Historical Society, 1935.

Collection of Minnesota Biographies. Minnesota Historical Society, 1910.
  - 2. Publications:

Minnesota Legislative Manual of 1891, 1893, 1901. Wilson Library, University of Minnesota.

Minnesota Executive Documents of 1891 and 1892. Wilson Library, University of Minnesota.
  - 3. Miscellaneous:

44th Biennial Report, Minnesota Veterans' Home. 7-1-72 to 6-30-74.

Minnesota Historical Society Audi-Visual Library - Photograph collection.

- D. Original architectural drawings: Architectural drawings for the original buildings drawings were not found.

Prepared by:  
Monty Woodley  
University of Minnesota  
April, 1988

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historic Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Monty Woodley, University of Minnesota, April, 1988.